

## Message Text

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ACTION IO-13

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-02 HEW-04 SSO-00  
NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00  
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 FDRE-00 AID-05 IOE-00 ABF-01 OMB-01  
TRSE-00 /048 W  
----- 125379 /43

O R 141100Z DEC 76  
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9113  
INFO AMEMBASSY MASERU  
AMEMBASSY MBABANE  
AMEMBASSY PREOTIRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GABORONE 2296

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SREF, BC, US  
SUBJECT: REFUGEES IN BOTSWANA; PROPOSED EMBASSY ASSISTANCE

REF: A. GABORONE 2110; B) GABORONE 2108, C. STATE 293926

1. SUMMARY: THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN BOTSWANA FROM CIVIL STRIFE AND OPPRESSION, PRIMARILY FROM SOUTH AFRICA AND RHODESIA, HAS REACHED THE POINT WHERE IT CONSTITUTES A SEVERE FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL HARDSHIP FOR THE GOB. IMPROVISED REFUGEE ACCOMMODATIONS CAUSE SOCIAL DISRUPTION AND UNREST, AROUSING GOB CONCERN FOR POLITICAL STABILITY. CURRENT LEVEL OF INTERNATIONAL AND OTHER ASSISTANCE IS INSUFFICIENT; GOB EMERGENCY FUNDS BEING REPIDLY DEPLETED. GIVEN URGENCY OF NEED, HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERSATION INVOLVED AND USG POLICY OF PROMOTING GOB STABILITY, EMBASSY BELIEVES A CONTRIBUTION OF EMERGENCY RELIEF ASSISTANCE IS JUSTIFIED. END SUMMARY.

2. BOTSWANA HAS ALWAYS PRIDED ITSELF ON ITS WILLINGNESS TO SERVE AS A TEMPORARY SAFE HAVEN FOR PERSONS FLEEING OPPRESSION, CIVIL STRIFE AND ECONOMIC DISRUPTION IN NEIGHBORING SOUTHERN AFRICAN NATIONS; THIS HAS LED TO RAPID GROWTH OF REFUGEE COMMUNITY IN BOTSWANA. GOB POLICY IS CLEAR -- AND MAGNANIMOUS. IN A 1975 INTERVIEW WITH THE JOHANNESBURG STAR, VICE PRESIDENT MASIRE REITERATED BOTSWANA'S INTENTION TO ASSIST REFUGEES, INCLUDING ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT GUERRILLA RECRUITS AMONG THEM WERE HELPED TO GO ON TO THEIR "FRONTLINE" STATES FOR TRAINING. IN BRIEF, GOB DOES  
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ITS UTMOST TO PROVIDE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE.

3. NUMBERS. THERE IS NO CONSENSUS AMONG GOG AND UNHCR OFFICIALS ON TOTAL REFUGEES OR NUMBERS OF NEW ARRIVALS. EMBASSY'S BEST ESTIMATE AS OF DEC. 14 IS 1151, A NOTABLE INCREASE FROM FEWER THAN 900 TWO MONTHS AGO. BREAKDOWN OF NUMBERS (BY GOB) IS AS FOLLOWS: 451 SOUTH AFRICANS (MAILY SOWETO STUDENTS STILL IN GABORONE), 361 RHODESIANS (PRIMARILY IN FRANCISTOWN), 117 ANGOLANS, 60 SWAPO, 33 SWANU AND 129 BASOTHO. (FIGURE OF 451 SOUTH AFRICANS WAS SUPPLIED BY SPECIAL BRANCH. OFFICE OF PRESIDENT ESTIMATES 600; UNHCR ESTIMATES 250-350. HOWEVER, ALL SOURCES WARN THAT NUMBER OF SOUTH AFRICANS, RHODESIANS AND NAMIBIANS FLUCUATES DAILY).

4. RESOURCES TO ASSIST REFUGEES. BOTSWANA IS CURRENTLY RECEIVING ASSISANCE FROM THE UNCHR AND INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY EXCHANGE FUND (IUEF) AS WELL AS VARIOUS RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDING THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES. UNHCR GIVES MONTHLY STIPEND OF P20 (P1-\$1.15) TO SOWETO REFUGEES. IN 1975, IT DONATED DOLS 10,000 TOWARD BUILDING OF REFUGEE CAMP IN FRANCISTOWN. IUEF IS CONTRIBUTING SCHOLARSHIPS AND PORTION OF BOTSWANA "COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES" ANNUAL BUDGET. GERMAN ORGANIZATION, FREIDRICH-EBERT FOUNDATION, GAVE P25,000 (DOLS 28,750) TOWARD REFUGEE CAMP CONSTRUCTION IN 1975 BUT HAS NOT OFFERED ASSISTANCE IN 1976. EXACT AMOUNT OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS' SUPPORT UNKNOWN TO EMBASSY, BUT FIGURE NOT LARGE.

5. DESPITE OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE, BOTSWANA'S MAGNANIMOUS REFUGEE POLICY HAS PROVED ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY COSTLY. MERELY FEEDING THE REFUGEES IN FRANCISTOWN AND ELSEWHERE IS COSTING P9,000 (DOLS 10,350 PER MONTH, AN AMOUNT GOB OFFICIALS PRIVATELY STRESS IS HARD TO FIND AND WHICH GOB CAN ILL AFFORD.

6. PROBLEMS. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED (REF A), THE SOWETO REFUGEES, MOSTLY YOUNG STUDENTS, AROUND GABORONE CONSTITUTE THE MOST SERIOUS SOCIAL PROBLEM. SOME 500 OF THEM ARE HERE AT ANY ONE TIME, LIVING UNDER CROWDED, IMPROVISED CONDITIONS, SOME WITH FAMILIES, MOST ON OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN. AT LEAST ONE RAPE AND SEVERAL BURGLARIES HAVE BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO THESE STUDENTS. PRESIDENT KHAMA PERSONALLY VOICED FEARS OF A THREAT TO STABILITY POSED BY THESE REFUGEES. DURING NOV. 29 SPEECH TO PARLIAMENT, KAHAM REMINDED HIS

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LISTENERS THAT THE "FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL STRAINS WHICH RESULT FROM THIS POLICY ARE BECOMING UNBEARABLE" FOR BOTSWANA. HE FURTHER WARNED OF AN INEVITABLE AND UNSETTLING "BACKLASH" AGAINST REFUGEES FROM THE COMMUNITY IF THE SITUATION WERE NOT RELIEVED. IN NOV. 16 PRESS RELEASE APPEALING FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE (REPORTED REF B ), GOB BEMOANED THE COSTS, BOTH MONETARY AND SOCIAL, OF THIS INFLUX OF REFUGEES. IT IMPLIED THAT "A CHANGE" IN POLICY MIGHT BE REQUIRED

SHOULD ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE NOT BE FORTHCOMING. GOB OFFICIALS HAVE INCREASED NUMBER OF QUIET APPEALS TO EMBOFFS IN RECENT WEEKS. NOTING INTERALIA THAT THEY DO NOT WANT FURTHER TO PUBLICIZE THEIR NEEDS FOR FEAR THIS COULD BE INTERPRETED BY REFUGEE MILITANTS AS LACK OF DESIRE TO HELP RO FOR FEAR OF POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS FROM SAG OR RHODESIA. ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER REFLECTED GOB PREOCCUPATION WITH YOUTH AFRICAN AND RHODESIAN REFUGEES IN OUR FIRST MEETING DEC.14

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CALLING SITUATION CRITICAL. EMBASSY BELIEVES GOB'S CONCERNS WARRANTED AND THAT NEED IS REAL AND PRESSING.

7. CONCLUSION. AFTER REVIEWING SITUATION CAREFULLY, I HAVE DETERMINED THAT SHORT-TERM RELIEF IS JUSTIFIED IN THE AMOUNT OF DOLS 20,000 UNDER AUTHORITY DESCRIBED 2 FAM 0165 FOR EMERGENCY RELIEF FOR ACTS OF MAN (RIOTS, VIOLENCE, CIVIL STRIFE). SUCH A GESTURE IS DIRECTLY IN SUPPORT OF U.S. POLICY, AS ENUNCIATED IN CURRENT PARA (GABORONE A-19), WHICH IS TO PROMOTE BOTSWANA'S STABILITY THE GOB JUDGES THAT PRESENT REFUGEE SITUATION IS A THREAT TO THAT STABILITY. WE AGREE. IN ADDITION, FROM CAREFUL SURVEY OF RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO GOB, NEED IS CLEARLY BEYOND MEANS AVAILABLE TO GOB. FOR EXAMPLE, DESPITE ASSISTANCE FROM UNHCR AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS, WE KNOW THAT GOB CURRENTLY HAS OUTSTANDING FOOD BILLS FOR AT LEAST DOLS 18,000 FOR REFUGEES FROM NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. IN ADDITION, RECURRING MONTHLY EXPENDITURE OF DOLS 10,500 IS SIGNIFICANT AND CONTINUING DRAIN ON BOTSWANA'S RESOURCES. A U.S. CONTRIBUTION NOW WOULD BE VIEWED AS RESPONSIVE TO UN "EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE" CALL WHICH USG SUPPORTED (REF C). IN THIS CONNECTION, EXTAFF SECRETARY RECENTLY TOLD EMBOFF THAT, BECAUSE U.S. HAS ALREADY DONE A GREAT DEAL FOR BOTSWANA, GOB APPEAL WAS TO "INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY" PARA 4, REF A). THEY WERE RELUCTANT TO APPEAL DIRECTLY DESPITE THE NEED. PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE FUNDS WOULD REPRESENT TIMELY, CONCRETE SUPPORT FOR HUMANITARIAN POLICIES OF A FRIENDLY, DEMOCRATIC, NON-RACIAL AFRICAN  
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STATE, THE FABRIC AND RESOURCES OF WHICH ARE SEVERELY STRAINED BY THE CONTRARY POLICIES OF NEIGHBORING STATES.

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O R 141100Z DEC 76  
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9114  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GABORONE 2296

8. POST DOES NOT BELIEVE THIS GRANT WOULD EITHER LEAD TO OPEN-ENDED GOB PRESSURES FOR MONEY OR PRECLUDE LONGER-TERM USG REFUGEE ASSISTANCE (E.G. TRAINING) OPTIONS. ON THE CONTRARY, DISCUSSIONS HAVE ACCELERATED ON EXPLORING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES. FINALLY, WE RECOGNIZE THAT PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION BEING SOUGHT FOR INCREASED LONG-TERM ASSISTANCE AND THAT AID HAS LINE ITEM IN BUDGET REGARDING REFUGEE TRAINING. HOWEVER, SUCH ACTIONS TAKE TIME TO COME TO FRUITION AND BOTSWANA SHORT OF FUNDS NOW. AS FOR SWAZILAND AND LESOTHO, WE UNDERSTAND REFUGEE SITUATION IN FORMER IS NOT COMPARABLE, BEING CHARACTERIZED BY A RELATIVELY SMALL (TO DATE) NUMBER STARYING A SHORT TIME; I SHALL SOON BE IN A POSITION TO EVALUATE THE SITUATION IN LESOTHO FIRST-HAND, DURING MY FORTHCOMING VISIT THERE.

9. PROPOSED ACTION. UNLESS PROMPTLY ADVISED TO CONTRARY (AND ASSUMING 75 STATE 046010 HAS BEEN SUPERSEDED), I PROPOSE TO INFORM GOB, PERHPAS DURING FIRST SUBSTANTIVE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT LATER THIS WEEK (FOLLOWING PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS ON DEC. 14) THAT WE WILL MAKE AVAILABLE DOLS 20,000 RPT 20,000 DONATION TO DEFRAY EXTRAORDINARY BURDEN ON GOB RESULTING FROM CIVIL UNREST IN NEIGHBORING STATES. I WOULD PROPOSE THAT NO PUBLICITY BE GIVEN THIS DONATION SO AS NOT TO ATTRACT REFUGEES TO BOTSWANA AND ADD TO, OR PROLONG, GOB PROBLEMS. AID REPRESENTATIVES (INCLUDING RDO) CONCUR IN THIS PLAN OF ACTION.

10 WOULD APPRECIATE PROMPT REPLY.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
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**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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